



# Toronto FC Media Conference

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*Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## John Herdman

Media Conference

Charlotte 3, Toronto FC 2

**Q. Disappointing result, I thought your team showed real grit in coming back a couple of times in a tough place but the other side of the coin, can you afford to give up goals like that?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** No. No. We can't afford to give up goals like that. No, we had that conversation in the huddle. There were so many things that I liked about the performance from a structural perspective, coming to a tough place like Charlotte with a team that's got a lot of quality in it, quality manager, as well. It is a tougher place to come to.

So to score two goals and in an away venue and not come away with something, it's really disappointing. But I was proud of the work that was put in and I was proud of how we were able to take momentum in big parts of the game. I wasn't happy with crosses that we're putting in the box and not really taking the chances that I feel teams have been taking against us. Again, I have to look at those goals. I mean, from that set piece, that stuff is just criminal for us. The group are very disappointed that we give some sloppy goals away. You know, the direct play, we have three players underneath and they were able to get a shot off. You know, there's a giveaway on the edge of our own area. When we are in control of game, we have good possession. For an away match, we had control, and then the set piece was for me mind-blowing. But it's where we're at. I mean, as a manager, there's things you can coach. There's things you can organize. The subs I thought we got right tonight, etc. But there's just some things that are going to take time for this team to understand, learn and we're going to have to go through those tough moments.

But massive amount of pride, as I said to them. I'll go to war with that team every week if that's who we are, tactically disciplined and taking on the front foot at times in a tough environment.

**Q. The introduction of Prince at the start of the second half, obviously proved to be a wise move. Just wanted to get your sort of thoughts on his play in the game and what you thought he brought to you guys in the second half.**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I was really happy with Prince. He's being an outstanding professional over the last three, four weeks as we give opportunities to different players and certainly took his opportunity. I mean tactically, we made an adjustment from a diamond to a box, attacking-wise in. The last ten minutes of the first half, when we started to get, 12 minutes we were getting a good rhythm in the game and we kept a box structure I think that helped him, it really did. I thought when we operated with a diamond, DK was a little isolated with Osorio trying to get underneath him but with Prince up there and having two players underneath him, I thought really helped him get free, and having those channel runs sort of opened him up off the front and we see some good play from Prince tonight. But I was really happy with his threat in the box. I thought tonight he was in the right spaces at the right time and just showed a different -- a different desire to score. So real big step for him. That's his first brace for the club, and it's a positive step forward, and in an area that we have been challenging the players to step forward in.



**Q. Aside from a couple of early looks for Charlotte, I thought that first half hour looked more like the start of the season tonight. Is that what you wanted tonight, to see that back to basics element?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** You hit the nail on the head. That's why I'm so upset with the goals we gave away. I thought we were so unprofessional on at least one of the goals but we were so professional in other areas in an away performance. Again we grew into the game, which you have to in away matches. The discipline, the tactical tightness. We talked about that in the press conference prior just how important it was to keep a tight time; and then pick our moments to attack until the game starts to open up and we knew Charlotte would start to open up. They are a front to back team and if we give them a lot of possession, things would open up.

But at the end, we sort of controlled the possession. We had a high percentage there and almost twice the -- we equalled their shots and our cross, and etc., in a tough away environment.

So I mean, I said that was what I said right at the end. I said, lads, this is the tort of TFC performances that we have been asking for. We are back to who we should be but those moments, we have to clean them up. We have to clean them moments up.

**Q. The last thing you need is to lose another center back, Long suspended now. Did you see that first yellow he got? He seemed upset that a foul wasn't called on Charlotte. Was it for dissent kicking the ball away? Was it a yellow?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I mean, I think there was a lot that was getting away tonight. I had a chat with the fourth official just before they scored just about some of the fouls. I thought they were fouls we were making that we were getting away with and fouls that they were making and particularly leading into that goal, I thought they were getting fouls, some fouls on Kev. Overall I think when referees are consistent, that's all you can ask for. If they are consistent for both teams, it is what it is. I've just got to accept it. I know I can't control that, no matter how many times you speak to the fourth official. You just can't control it. I thought the referee was consistent tonight for both teams. I have to say that. And the yellow card, I'll have a look at it.

And losing centre-backs, I think DK might be carrying something, as well. So it's just next man up again. Here we go again. And you know, I think we're enjoying bringing this together with the group. There's some adversity there and pushing the group through adversity. We get home next week. We get a chance to really regroup in front of our fans and hopefully carry on elements of that performance into our next match.

**Q. Just a follow-up if I may, was taking Kerr off at halftime, was that tactical or because he went down, he seemed to be favoring something?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, a bit of both. A bit of both. So you know, the player was carrying something there, and it's just whether you want to push that. I think, again, just shifts into some of the tactical framework from an attacking perspective. I know Prince is a lot more experienced playing in that box for TFC when we go genuinely 3-4-3. Yeah, it was a bit of both there.

**Q. In the last three games that you've lost, it's been you guys that have conceded first and of course you ended up losing the game. It's going back -- you have to go back two years before the last time this team conceded the first goal and won in an MLS game. I know you haven't been here all that long but can you just speak to why this team has such a -- seems to have trouble playing from behind after conceding that first goal?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** Yeah, I think -- I mean, last week was -- was definitely a different story, and ultimately KC, two things that boil into mind -- I think what I enjoyed tonight was the response. I thought the response was brilliant. This is a tough place to come and get goals as you've seen from Columbus and Cincinnati who found it difficult to score here. Having found two, I was proud of the lads. But once you go behind in games, you have to commit. You have to invest and when you're investing, you are going to leave yourself open. But that really wasn't the story tonight. That wasn't really the story.

The story last week was exactly that. We were too -- too eager and didn't manage those chaos moments which I spoke to trying to get a goal back and just be more patient. Tonight, and I said at halftime, Lads, when we were down in Charlotte,



you're in the game, you really are in the game. Tactically, how does it feel? We feel good. Okay, you're right where you need to be. You can come back. And I genuinely believed that we would get good opportunities in this game and take them. I think tonight felt different. The comeback was there and I think we lost the game and I think we lost it in just really disappointing circumstances. It's been three weeks, two particularly, of self-destruct moments. And I've got to work with this group to eliminate them because it's -- I mean, it's all destroying, isn't it, for the players, when they have got that work in and it's just stupid errors. You know, like the set piece. It was just, oh, my goodness, how on earth did we not have a player when pressed up, you know. And that's the stuff, if that's what we've got to clean up, we'll work towards it.

**Q. This might just be a bit of a statistical anomaly, but I think in the last three matches, you guys have out-performed the opponent in terms of XG but they have radically exceeded theirs in goals. What is that telling you what do you take from that?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I mean, our boys are giving it everything. They are actually giving it everything. You know, there's elements of the performance we can really take positives from, and sell that. But at the end of the day, we're coming up against Charlotte, we lost 3 DPs on the pitch. That's the difference in this league, two DPs, 3 DPs that have consistency playing together. That extra quality makes all the difference. As I said to you, there's balls going into the box tonight which were just delicious. Like you would guarantee if you were playing against Cincinnati, when you've got three players at the back post open, someone is going to score that goal. And for us, we're working at it. We have to work at it. I think all the players are willing to keep committing. They know where we're at and we just have to keep finding our ways, and they did tonight. They found two goals. The one for me was a really good team goal.

**Q. Obviously Alonso, a very talented young player, what do you say to him when he makes such an errant pass that leads to that -- was it the second goal, I believe?**

**JOHN HERDMAN:** I mean, look, he apologized in the huddle tonight. He was brave enough to accept some responsibility. But we lose together. We lose together. Like tactically as a manager, I'm asking him to be brave. I mean, you can come to Charlotte and just shell the ball. You can shell it front to back. That's not what TFC fans want. They want to see a team that can win, there's no doubt. But they want to see a team that's brave and that are looking to get on the ball and that are looking to break lines.

You see the young Liverpool lad the other week make the same error and Fernandez puts the top in. This is football when you're asking teams to play at the highest level, you've got to be brave, and you're going to have nights like that. I mean, it's been two weeks we have seen those sort of errors and there's an element for me where I have to make sure we have more clarity on those patterns in and around that area so we don't get caught like that and we pick the right option and I have to take the responsibility as much as any of the players.

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